

PHILOSOPHY
AND
POLITICAL
CHANGE
IN EASTERN
EUROPE

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THE NEW EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY

There is a somewhat crude but still serviceable distinction between "Anglo-Saxon philosophy" on the one hand and "Continental philosophy" on the other.¹ The former sees the discipline of philosophy as being in the first place a technical enterprise, in some ways comparable to physics or mathematics (for example, in that it is largely confined to universities). The latter places greater emphasis on a conception of philosophy as an enterprise enjoying a wider social and political relevance. Thus on the Continent philosophy has been, and is still, more closely intertwined with religion and literature, with journalism and ideology, than is the case in the English-speaking world. What counts as "philosophy" in the two cultures is accordingly somewhat different: much of the work of Habermas, for instance, would be classified in England or America not as philosophy but as sociology or as social or political criticism.²

The philosophers of Eastern and Central Europe have for some time constituted a third group, skew to the two just mentioned, though incorporating elements of each. As a result of recent political events, such philosophers are now confronted with a unique opportunity—the opportunity to rebuild their philosophical culture, as it were, from the ground up. The necessity of such rebuilding is faced to different degrees and in different ways in the different parts of post-Communist Europe. In Poland, above all, there is a certain continuity. But there, too, new institutions and associations are being founded and old ones closed; new journals are being established and new curricula fashioned and taught; new faculty is being appointed while politically discredited members of the formerly Communist academic structures are being encouraged to retire.

What, then, are the choices by which philosophers in post-Communist Europe are confronted? One very real alternative, particularly against the background of a conception of philosophy as a discipline enjoying wider social and political relevance, is a sort of *national* philosophy: a philosophy in Hungarian, for example (and analogously for Croatians, Rumanians, Bulgarians, and so on)—a philosophy which would address the problems which Hungarians face, problems rooted in Magyar culture, language and history; a philosophy which would do full justice to the thesis—embraced by many philosophers—to the effect that one cannot do really good philosophy except within one's own language and culture. A development along these lines will surely be taken seriously by many intellectuals of standing in Russia. In Hungary, or Slovenia, however, one disadvantage of such a course is obvious: it would result in a philosophy which almost no one outside the given countries would understand or care about, simply because there is almost no one outside the given countries who reads Hungarian or Slovenian and who is sufficiently attuned to the local

culture and history to find more than curiosity interest in the products of a philosophy of the suggested sort.

At the opposite extreme, as it were, is professionalism *à la* Princeton or Pittsburgh: the deliberate cultivation of a technical, scientific philosophy addressing problems of a universal or abstract character. This is the course which has been adopted already, for example, by many of the best philosophers in Finland, itself one of the most sophisticated philosophical cultures in Europe. Thus Finnish philosophers take it as a matter of course that they must publish and lecture in English, that their students must read philosophy in English, and that they must compete and collaborate intensively with philosophers and institutions abroad. The result is a philosophical culture with an international reputation that is second to none. But it is also a philosophy which has sacrificed its local character for the sake of technical competence.

A third alternative (or family of alternatives), which some might be disposed to regard as a sort of compromise between these two extremes, would consist in the forming of alliances not with Anglo-Saxon philosophy but rather (as at various times in the past) with Germany or France. (This alternative is indeed in process of being imposed upon the philosophers of the former German Democratic Republic by *force majeure*.)

The necessity to make a choice between the mentioned groups of alternatives is, I believe, a real existential problem facing some hundreds of young philosophers in Eastern and Central Europe today. Should young Hungarian philosophers, for example, learn English, devote their attention to English-language philosophy journals, train themselves to meet the exacting (and sometimes stifling) writing and lecturing standards dominant in the Anglo-Saxon world? Or should they rather learn German or French? Germany is, to be sure, a still thriving philosophical culture, though as already suggested, there is a sense in which German philosophers have manifested an increasing tendency to abandon the classical concerns of philosophy in favour of something more like critical sociology. Moreover, it seems that there are at the moment few German philosophers—and this for several independent reasons—who are making serious contributions to philosophy which are of international standing.

What, then, of France? Contemporary French philosophy does, it is true, consist of much more than the absurd Dadaistic clowning of Derrida and his ilk. Yet still, it seems that Derrida is to some degree representative of the style and mores of current native French philosophy, and this implies that France, too, faces serious obstacles if it wishes to draw upon its own resources in order to make contributions to philosophy of international consequence. Indeed many young French (and Italian and Swiss and Spanish) philosophers are beginning to embrace at least some aspects of the approach to philosophy that is dominant in the Anglo-Saxon world, in part as a response to the excesses of *la pensée* 68.³

Of course in each post-Communist philosophical community different individuals will make different choices (so that the extremes will to some extent cancel each other out). Moreover, some will try to bring about new sorts of syntheses between philosophical currents and traditions hitherto seen as incompatible, thus applying methods normally seen as belonging to one philosophical culture to the problems thrown up by another. The fact that new choices will be made and new philosophical cultures nurtured in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe must, however, have a serious cumulative effect. Indeed I would go so far as to claim that philosophers outside post-Communist Europe—including Anglo-Saxon, German and French philosophers—are themselves destined to be affected by the decisions which are made by philosophers in Poland or Hungary or the Czech Republic in the coming years. For new sorts of collaboration between East and West will influence also the Western philosophers who become involved therein. The concept of "Continental philosophy," like the concept of Europe itself, will be to this extent transformed.

The New European Philosophy

Much of what until recently passed for "advanced European philosophy" in Paris and its intellectual suburbs has, surely, reached a point of no return in degree of absurdity and willful obfuscation. (Or, as its more candid adherents will admit, it is not "philosophy" at all, but a sort of literary or cultural criticism.) The philosophy of formerly Communist Europe, in contrast, is destined to enjoy a new lease of genuine philosophical life: *the centre of gravity of European philosophy is set to move east.*

From this point of view it is important to bear in mind that the countries of Eastern and Central Europe are in fact able to draw upon rich philosophical cultures of their own, cultures which go back much further than the Marxist-Leninist philosophy which has enjoyed a certain institutional dominance in these countries since the 1940s and '50s. Here I am interested above all in the philosophical culture of Central Europe—of Poland, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Ukraine, etc. This culture, which is rooted in a wider Latin culture (as contrasted with the Byzantine roots of much Russian philosophy), may be said to have been initiated with the founding of the Charles University in Prague in 1348. It embraces (to mention just one, albeit prominent, example) the Bohemian logician-priest Bernard Bolzano, whose *Theory of Science* of 1837 can be seen in retrospect as one of the earliest contributions to that exact or scientific philosophy which in the Anglo-Saxon world constitutes the contemporary mainstream.⁴

This native Central-European philosophical culture has in the last 100 years been marked above all by the thinking of Franz Brentano, the founder of mod-

ern Austrian philosophy, whose pupils Kasimir Twardowski, Alexius Meinong, Christian von Ehrenfels, Edmund Husserl, Carl Stumpf Anton Marty, and T.G. Masaryk shaped the philosophical cultures of, especially, German-speaking Europe and the Habsburg lands in the decades around the turn of the present century (a time when philosophers working on the Continent still enjoyed friendly and collaborative relations with their English-speaking counterparts).⁵ Brentano was at least in part responsible also for the fact that philosophy in Central Europe—in Vienna, Prague, Lemberg, Trieste, Laibach and Graz—enjoyed friendly relations with the sciences (above all with empirical psychology), and with logic and mathematics. He and his followers can to this extent be seen to have prepared the ground for that alliance between science and philosophy which was Vienna-Circle positivism.⁶

There are some, above all in the Czech Republic and in Poland, who never broke with these Bolzanian-Brentanian roots of Central European philosophy. They were thereby able to preserve the continuity of this older tradition. More of the brightest Polish and Czech and Hungarian and Slovenian and Croatian philosophers are now, or will in time be, in a position to do the same, in ways which are destined to bring about a renewed collaboration with their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

Part and parcel of the changes which result will, I believe, be a new pattern of alliances on the Continent of Europe between philosophy and other disciplines, including mathematical logic, linguistics, psychology, and so on. But it will involve also the establishment of a new or extended canon of "Continental philosophy", a new list of exemplars or paragons (new intellectual "masters" if one will), embracing figures beyond the usual confines of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Habermas, Gadamer, etc. to include also Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Slovenes—new philosophical heroes who can be seen as part of a continuing tradition of philosophy stretching from Bolzano and Brentano to the present day. Husserl has already been mentioned in this respect, not, however, or not exclusively, as the initiator of the tradition which includes Heidegger, Sartre, *et al.*, but rather as a philosopher of mathematics and logic, a thinker born in Moravia and educated in Vienna, the teacher of Roman Ingarden and of Adolf Reinach.⁷ Other thinkers worthy of being mentioned in this connection are Aurel Kolnai, Michael Polanyi, Roman Jakobson, Max Scheler, Stanislaw Lesniewski, Tadeusz Kotarbiński and Josef Bocheński.

In tandem with these developments there will arise also, I believe, a new or extended conception of what exact or scientific (or "analytic") philosophy is. The latter has hitherto been seen in Continental Europe as a rather narrow affair, allied of its very nature to positivistic, reductionistic and materialistic tendencies and somehow excessively oriented around formal logic and natural science at the expense of concerns with, for example, politics, law and culture. If, how-

ever, Brentano and Twardowski, Reinach and Polanyi are included as part of a single tradition along with Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein and Carnap, then this tradition itself begins to bear a richer aspect. It is no longer exclusively oriented around language or logic, but manifests also a psychological sophistication that modern analytic philosophers are only now beginning to acquire, in part as a result of the influence of developments in cognitive science. It is marked by a concern not so much, or not exclusively, with questions of "reducing" one domain to another, but rather with the explanation of how the different domains of reality (above all of logic, language, thought and action) hang together. Analytic philosophy in this wider sense is distinguished not by positivism or reductionism but rather by its concern with a certain sort of clarity, the clarity of *argument*, and thus by a certain sort of philosophical style, analogous in some ways to that of textbooks of mathematics or physics (though not necessarily always in such a way as to involve the use of any specific formal machinery).⁸

Marxism, Economics and Logic

In what respects, now, might Western European and especially French and German philosophy be affected by the developments I have mentioned? Note, first of all, that for all my comments above as to the wider social and political relevance of "Continental" philosophy, there is one respect in which Anglo-Saxon philosophers, too, can point to certain not insignificant achievements in this regard. For we can register in the Anglo-Saxon world more than two centuries of fruitful interaction between philosophy and *economics*, and collaboration of a similar sort was a characteristic feature also of the intellectual world of Central Europe at least in the half-century beginning in 1871.⁹ In post-war France and Germany, in contrast, the possibilities for such collaboration have been usurped by the single all-embracing figure of Marx (and I venture that it will be very difficult for intelligent philosophers in post-Communist Europe to take the economic ideas of Marx seriously in the years to come). One can point, indeed, to a long-standing alliance between Anglo-Saxon and Central European intellectuals working on the borderlines of philosophy and economics,¹⁰ an alliance which includes (in no particular order): Friedrich Hayek, Lionel Robbins, Alfred Schütz, Felix Kaufmann, Frank Ramsey, Karl Popper, Fritz Machlup, George Stigler, James Buchanan, John von Neumann, Herbert Simon, Ludwig von Mises, Michael Polanyi, John Neville Keynes, John Rawls, William Stanley Jevons, Carl Menger, Karl Menger, Jr., G. L. S. Shackle, Robert Nozick, Friedrich von Wieser, Christian von Ehrenfels and Gary Becker—and which has no counterpart as far as the philosophical traditions of France and Germany are concerned.

Contemporary French and German philosophy is marked, finally, by a similar deficit also as far as *logic* is concerned. Certainly there have been individual French and German logicians of genius. Yet there are few serious and creative communities of logicians working within the departments of philosophy of French and German universities today, and therefore also little serious interaction between logicians and those working in other branches of philosophy. And again: conditions in Eastern and Central Europe are quite different also in this respect. It is above all in Poland, of course, that we find the most important traditions of both philosophical and mathematical logic (and the most open and creative philosophical culture of Communist Europe). Yet other Eastern and Central European countries, too, can boast communities of logicians of no small standing. My conjecture, therefore, is that Continental philosophy is destined to evolve at least incrementally also in a logical direction—not least in the sense that future generations of philosophers in Continental Europe will become increasingly accustomed to treating philosophy as a discipline, open to neighbouring sciences, and subject to certain minimal standards of clarity and rigour.

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name as that of the journal edited until 1945 by N. Berdjaev in Paris as the organ of Russian (mainly religious) philosophy—a main purpose of which will be to publish translations; an accompanying book series is also planned for the same purpose. I owe this information to the editor and leading spirit of this project, Anatoli Jakovlev.

37. The department is chaired by V. I. Kovalenko and the chair of political philosophy has been entrusted to Victor V. Il'in.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TEN (pp. 165-170) *The New European Philosophy*

1. The distinction is based above all on the radically different role of texts and authorities in the two traditions. On the one hand are those philosophical cultures which are based on training in argument and in certain associated technical methods and whose primary concern is the finding of solutions to problems of certain clearly demarcated sorts. On the other hand are those philosophical cultures which are marked by the presence of "masters" and "initiates" and whose primary concern is the development of the philosophy of a given school (philosophizing through Kant, or Hegel, or Heidegger, and so on). See my "Textual Deterrence," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 28 (1991), 1-13.

2. See L. B. Puntel, "The History of Philosophy in Contemporary Philosophy: The View from Germany," *Topoi*, 10 (1991), 147-54.

3. See on this the useful work of Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La pensée 68. Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain*, Paris: Gallimard, 1985 (Eng. trans. *French Philosophy of the Sixties. An Essay on Antihumanism*, Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990).

4. On the Central European roots of analytic philosophy see Michael Dummett, *Ursprünge der analytischen Philosophie*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1987.

5. Through his pupil, Husserl, Brentano of course also crucially influenced post-war French philosophy. On Brentano's early influence see, e.g., R. Haller, *Studien zur Österreichischen Philosophie*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1979 and J. C. Nyiri, ed., *From Bolzano to Wittgenstein: The Tradition of Austrian Philosophy*, Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1986.

6. See my "Austrian origins of Logical Positivism," in B. Gower, ed., *Logical Positivism in Perspective*, London/Sydney: Croom Helm (1987), Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble (1988), 35-68 and in K. Szaniawski, ed., *The Vienna Circle and the Lvov-Warsaw School*, Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: Kluwer (1989) 19-53.

7. See K. Mulligan, ed., *Speech Act and Sachverhalt: Reinach and the Foundations of Realist Phenomenology*, Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: Nijhoff, 1987.

8. The history of philosophy, too, can be seen as being allied with exact or analytic philosophy in this wider sense, namely insofar as it is carried out in a clear and rigorous fashion.

9. The year of publication of Carl Menger's *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre* (Vienna: Braumüller, Eng. trans. *Principles of Economics*, New York and London: New York University Press, 1976), a work which initiated the so-called

"Austrian School of Economics." See W. Grassl and B. Smith, eds., *Austrian Economics. Historical and Philosophical Background*, London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986.

10. See Deborah A. Redman, *Economics and the Philosophy of Science*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.